

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

PA-27
PAGE # 030215204

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

1 NAME

HISTORIC

AND/OR COMMON

ROCKFORD (PHILPOT HOUSE, OASHELL HOUSE)

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

☒ VICINITY OF

COUNTY

Philpot Road
Phoenix

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT
☐ BUILDING(S)
☐ STRUCTURE
☐ SITE
☐ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

☐ PUBLIC
☐ PRIVATE
☐ BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS
☐ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

☐ OCCUPIED
☐ UNOCCUPIED
☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

☐ YES: RESTRICTED
☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED
☐ NO

PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE ☐ MUSEUM
☐ COMMERCIAL ☐ PARK
☐ EDUCATIONAL ☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE
☐ ENTERTAINMENT ☐ RELIGIOUS
☐ GOVERNMENT ☐ SCIENTIFIC
☐ INDUSTRIAL ☐ TRANSPORTATION
☐ MILITARY ☐ OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Telephone #:

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

☐ VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Liber #:

Folio #:

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

☐ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

BA-271

CONDITION

☐ EXCELLENT

☐ GOOD

☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED

☐ RUINS

☐ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☐ UNALTERED

☐ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☐ ORIGINAL SITE

☐ MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

8 SIGNIFICANCE

BA-271

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW		
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE

COUNTY

STATE

COUNTY

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

ORGANIZATION

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 267-1438

THE HOUSE

BA-271

The Philpot House sprawls over a wooded knoll among the hills along the Gunpowder Falls in the heart of Baltimore County. Only the gambel-roofed end of the house is visible through the trees as one approaches from the opposite side of the Falls on the Phoenix Road. To view the entire structure one must enter the drive that curves upward around the ice house and proceed just a little beyond it. From that point the sight that greets the beholder will quicken the pulse of anyone who appreciates early architecture.

The first time I saw the Philpot House was in the Library of Congress, thumbing through the Maryland file of the Historic American Building Survey. Tom Gleason was with me at the time, and we paused over the four photographs of it. Though the location sounded familiar, I could not recall ever having seen it and assumed that, like so many other houses in the HABS collection, it was gone.

Just about a year later Jack Gleason and I were out on one of our many "house hunting" expeditions, looking for "Partnership," a 1723 house built in Howard County and recently rebuilt on Stockton Road by the Coopers. Taking a roundabout route we stumbled onto Philpot Road and the house. Excited by the discovery, we quickly expended the eight remaining exposures on the roll of film in the camera and headed back to town to get Tom and more film. When Tom saw the house, he remembered having seen it in the HABS file; so we immediately went to the Johns Hopkins Library to get the HABS Catalogue just to make sure. Sunday we took Roy out to show him the discovery, and his reaction was the same as ours of the day before.

Through Mrs. George, who lived on Mt. Vernon Place, we learned that the house belonged to the Dashiells, who graciously gave permission to go on the property to sketch and photograph the house.

The house is situated between the tidewater and the hill country of the state and is unique in the manner in which its architecture reflects this location. The wooden, gambrel roofed section follows the lines of many in the tidewater region, where they are built of wood or brick. The stone section is brown ledge-stone, a material that is popular from Cockeysville northward into Pennsylvania.

The description of the Philpot House in the Historic American Building Survey, which was recorded in 1936, reads simply: "Early nineteenth-century house, Phoenix, Baltimore County, Maryland."

The recording architect did not bother to record his name.

Establishing a date of construction for an old house without any examination of deeds, grants, wills or other written records is a difficult task for anyone not thoroughly informed in the methods and materials of colonial building. It is unfortunate, therefore, that neither Forman, Ewald nor Scarff was the recording architect.

A great deal of the charm of the Philpot House is derived from its variety of materials and its several stages of construction and remodeling. By examining each of these one can trace the house back beyond the last quarter of the eighteenth century.

Before turning to an analysis of the house, it should be said that the porch on the front with its concrete posts and heavy iron chain is an unfortunate mistake dating from sometime within the last fifty years. The porch is much too heavy in design and completely out of harmony with the remainder of the house. The other exception is the glassed-in conservatory at the back, perhaps added at the same time or slightly earlier. These two features will be ignored in the remainder of this analysis, and are commented upon only to point up the lack of artistic judgement and taste used in times of relative abundance as compared with those earlier years when the house was built.

First -- a look at the front and rear doors in the wooden section of the house. The original doors were exchanged for the more fashionable Greek Revival style, with only two panels, sometime in the 1830's or early 1840's, and four panels of etched ruby glass were inserted into each of the transoms. A porch was added at the end of the house overlooking the Falls, which made it necessary to cut a door into the living room wall between the two windows. That the door was not original can be deduced from the fact that nowhere else in the wooden section is the proportion of window or door space so cramped. The early builders achieved a degree of proper proportion that has not been equaled since. However, if a porch was desired, this was the most logical and architecturally suited location. Steps would have descended from the center of the porch, and perhaps a walk at one time crossed the lawn and proceeded on down the terraced gardens below.

The handsome Federal mantel and the dado rail -- a feature not used for long thereafter -- would indicate that the living room was

thoroughly remodeled between 1795 and 1815. The dining room fireplace was trimmed with a new mantel at about the same time, and a number of doors that may have had only latches were fitted with iron box locks that bear the seal of the "Eagle" or the "Lion and Unicorn", which were in common use at the close of the eighteenth century.

A door from the dining room leads to an extension, complete with its own cellar, which may have been added between the turn of the century and the 1830's. The addition of this extension blocked daylight entering the dining room, and it is probably at this time that the wall between the hall and the dining room was removed. This required the straightening of the stairway, and a vestibule or entry was created at the front door. This deduction is based on the flat panel doors found in each of these areas.

The door to the closet under the stairs is very old, and, under several layers of paint, one discovers that the first color ever applied is a dark rusty hue. The door of simple raised panels is hung on large H&L hinges which are handmade and anchored with home-forged nails that have large, irregular heads. At the top of the treads and risers of the stairs which form the back wall of this closet can be seen the first of the original winder treads of the stairs, which originally turned at this point.

A plaster ceiling has been removed from the room which once comprised the old hallway and the dining room, exposing the beams in this area. Two beams inserted to fill the area once occupied by the stairs do not match the others, which are original to the house and have a beaded edge. Again, under traces of whitewash that preceded the plaster ceiling, can be found evidence of the powdery old red paint. The beams above that part of the room which was within the stone portion of the house are even earlier and are very carefully hewn. All of the beams still have in them the old hand-forged nails that held the ceiling laths in place; they are in excellent condition.

The end girt of the gambrel roof portion of the house rests on an encased corner post, clearly marking that point where the two rooms are joined now into one. The other corner post is hidden behind the stairway, but the lower part of it can be seen inside the stair closet.

The closet door to the left of the dining room fireplace dates from the time the gambrel roof section was constructed as does the

door into the living room. Over this latter door is the only section of panelling found in the entire house. Its unfinished side is toward the living room, which would indicate that it had been placed there sometime after that room had been redecorated. It is most likely that the living room had been at least partly panelled at one time, and the door was moved from the left side of the living room fireplace when the entry was created.

The woodwork in the chamber above the living room all appears to be original except for a board shelf nailed to the top of the fireplace moulding. Most of the doors on the second floor are hung on hinges which match those on the stair closet door below.

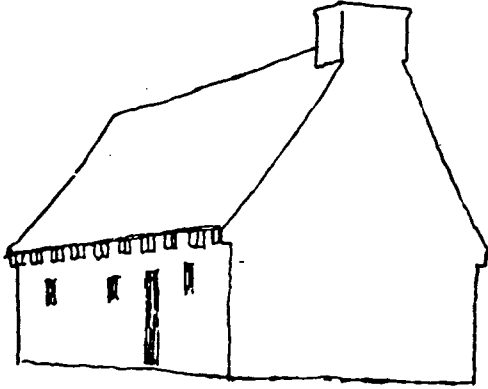
Very early -- possibly before the gambrel roofed addition was built -- small cell rooms had been added to the rear of the kitchen, and then the roof of the kitchen was raised to accommodate a small cell bedroom above.

Many other details of the house and its construction point to how mistaken the nameless recording architect was. The encased corner posts in the living room; the wide, random width boards of the flooring throughout the house; the large openings of the fireplaces; and the exposed ends of the joists in the stone section are but a few of the witnesses to the ancient vintage of the house. It is hoped that, as the summer progresses and time permits a more thorough examination of the house and perhaps some research of the records pertaining to the land, more can be learned. It is possible that we are examining a structure that has its beginning even before the close of the seventeenth century, but this could only be traced through recorded documents.

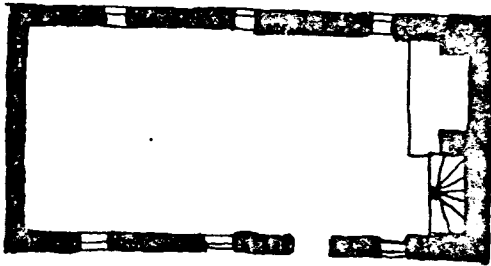
Early in the last decade of the 17th-century , a series of outposts were erected, in a line extending from Garrison, just northwest of the present Baltimore City line, to the Susquehanna River. Known as Rangers, the men who manned the outposts, had the task of patrolling the frontier against hostile Indians, stirred up by a renegade named Baron Castine.

Of the twenty outpost buildings erected across Baltimore and Harford County, only a few remain that we can be certain of.

Fortunately the Headquarters house at Garrison is still standing and in use. Now two stories high , it was built originally as one large room and a loft. A fireplace at one end provided the heat and light entered through small slits in the thick stone walls.



The other buildings in the system were for the most part identical, the only difference being in their length. The Rigby house, just north of Dublin, in Harford County was a part of the chain and it too has survived the years in good condition. One end was demolished in the 18th-century to make room for the wooden addition.



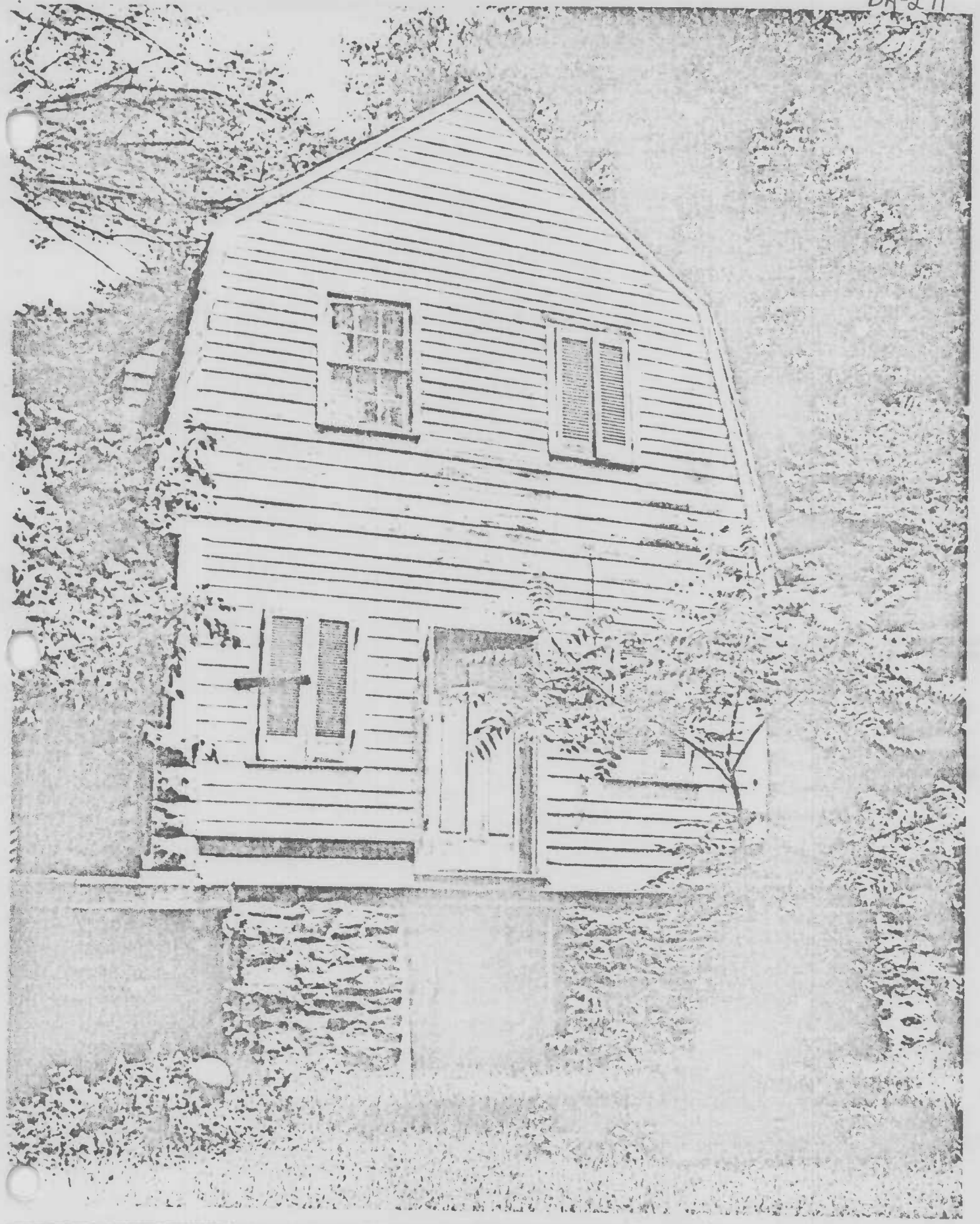
If one were to draw a line from the house at Garrison, north-east, through the Rigby House to the Susquehanna, he would discover the Philpot house sets smack on it. In the plan of the Philpot House on the opposite page, the strong resemblance to the rangers houses can be seen.

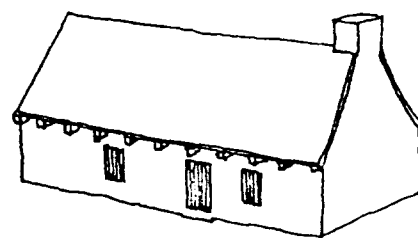
As previously stated, when the time is available for some real investigation, it may prove that the Philpot House has more than its architectural history to recommend it.



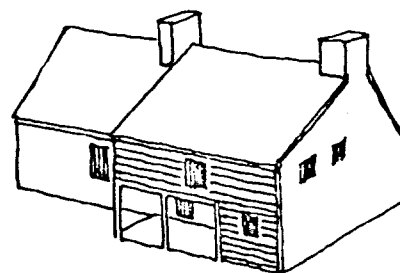
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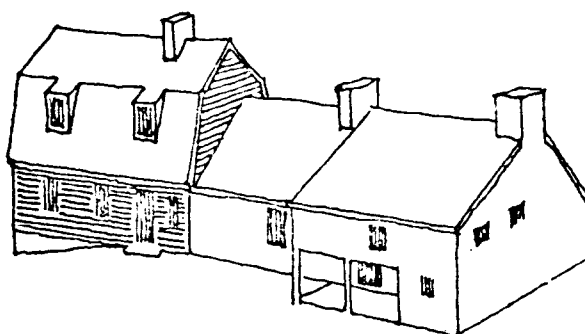




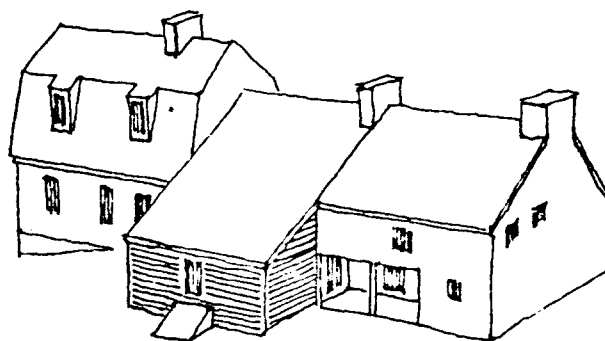
1690



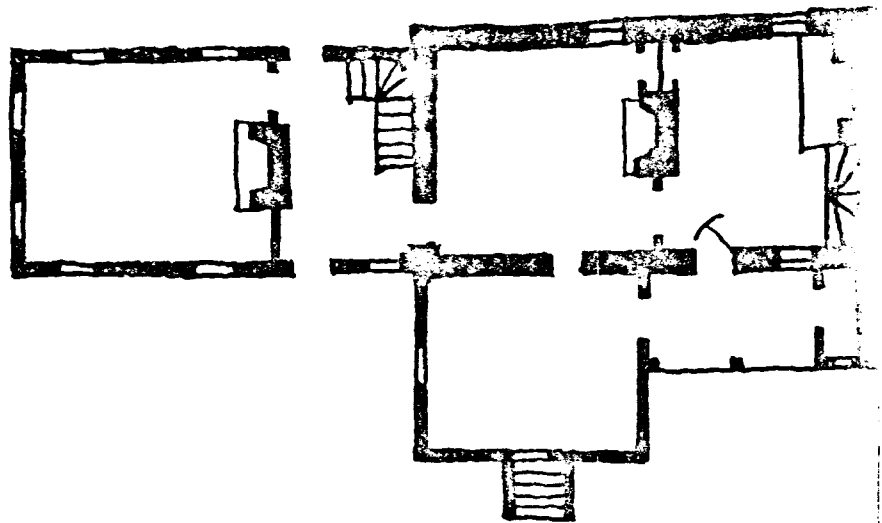
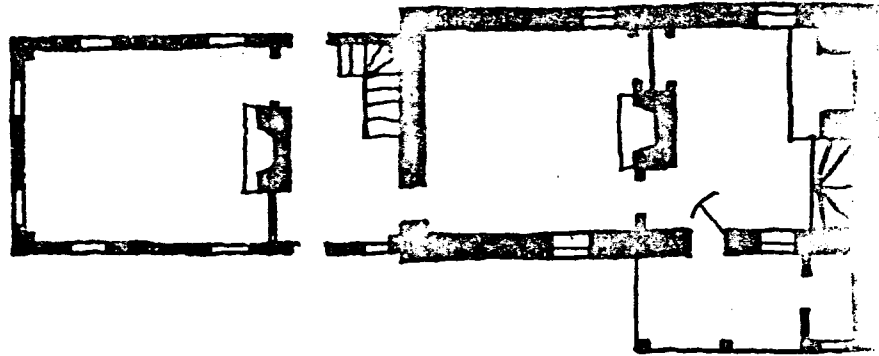
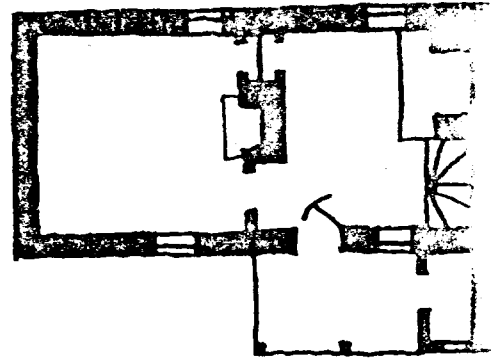
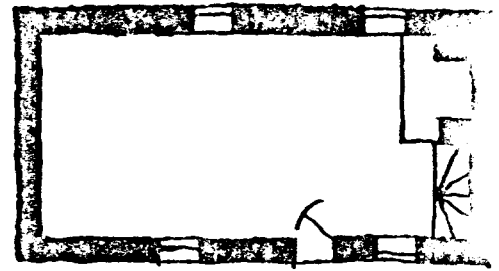
1730



1765



1825

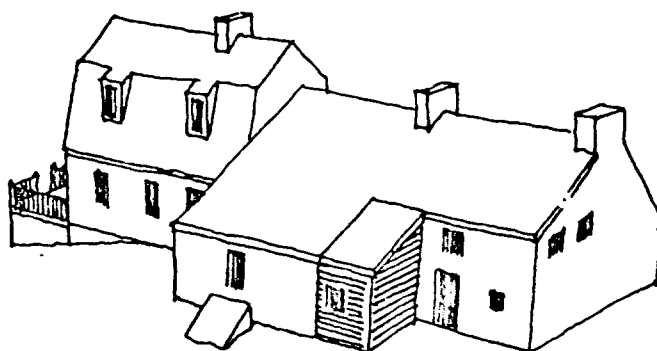
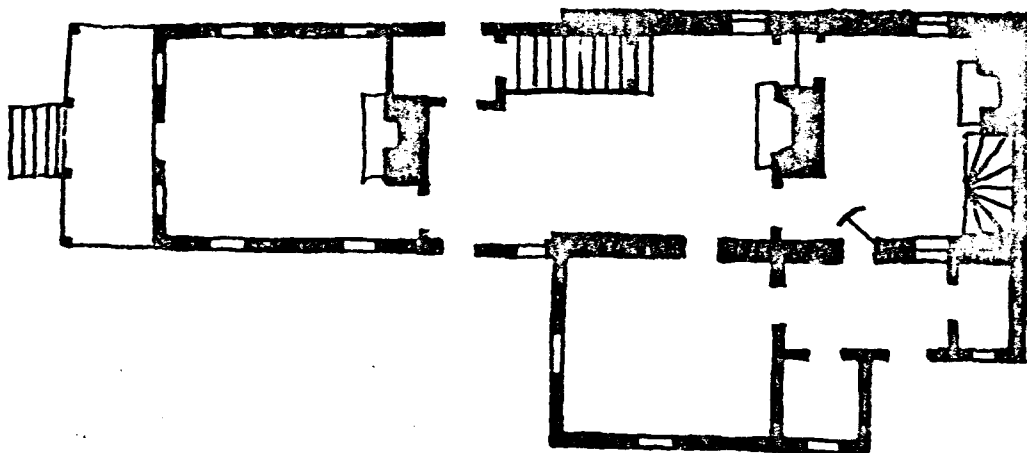


THE STONE SECTION WAS ERECTED FIRST AND ITS APPEARANCE WAS VERY SIMILAR TO THOSE BUILT TO HOUSE THE RANGER SYSTEM. THE SECOND FLOOR JOISTS WERE EXPOSED AT THE EAVES; SEVERAL OF WHICH ARE STILL VISABLE IN THE AREA JUST ABOVE THE KITCHEN DOOR.

WHEN THE SINGLE ROOM WAS DIVIDED IN HALF, A FIREPLACE WAS ADDED AND PERHAPS OWING TO A GROWING FAMILY , A SMALL CELL BEDROOM WAS ALSO ADDED ABOVE A YET SMALLER CELL AND A PORCH. THE EXTERIOR BOARDS HAVE A BEADED EDGE.

POSSIBLY BUILT FOR A NEW BRIDE, THE GAMBREL ROOFED ADDITION PROVIDED A LARGE BEDROOM, A SMALLER ONE AND A NICELY PROPORTIONED LIVINGROOM, WITH VISABLE CORNER POSTS. THE STAIR-HALL, PLACED BETWEEN THE LIVINGROOM AND THE OLD DININGROOM WOULD HAVE HAD THE SAME EFFECT AS A CENTERHALL. BY 1750 , CENTERHALL HOUSES WERE VERY POPULAR.

STILL MORE SPACE WAS NEEDED TO HOUSE THE FAMILY, BOTH THE YOUNG AND THE OLD, AS WELL AS THE EXTRA FARM HELP, SO THE LONG OUTSHUT, BEHIND THE DININGROOM WAS ADDED. A CELLAR BENEATH HAD ITS OWN OUTSIDE ENTRANCE. THE LIVINGROOM HAD BEEN REMODELED BY THIS TIME, IN THE FEDERAL STYLE. THE OTHER CHANGES ON THE GROUND FLOOR WERE MOST LIKELY COMPLETED IN THIS TIME PERIOD.



1840

AS A FINAL PHASE IN THE HISTORY OF THE HOUSE, A PANTRY WAS ADDED INCONSPICUOUSLY AT THE REAR, NEXT TO THE KITCHEN DOOR. THE MAIN DOORS WERE EXCHANGED FOR THOSE THEN IN FASHION AND A PORCH FOR RELAXATION WAS ADDED TO THE LIVINGROOM END OF THE HOUSE, OVERLOOKING THE TERRACED GARDEN AND THE FALLS. REMEMBERING THE " SPIRIT " OF THE ERA -- THE SATISFACTION OF KNOWING THAT ONE HAD AT LAST ARRIVED FROM THOSE DAYS WHEN HIS PIONEER ANCESTORS HAD WORKED SO HARD TO ESTABLISH THIS COMFORTABLE ENVIRONMENT FOR HIM -- AND REMEMBERING THE WILD AND ROMANTIC VISTAS IN THE "HUDSON RIVER VALLEY SCHOOL" OF PAINTINGS, THEN SO POPULAR, WE CAN VISUALIZE THIS RURAL FAMILY SPENDING A PLEASANT SUNDAY AFTERNOON ENJOYING THEIR OWN WILD AND ROMANTIC VISTA FROM THE PORCH.

1638 - ROBERT PHILPOT ??

In 1638 Leonard Calvert, the Lieutenant Governor of Maryland, in a letter to his brother, the Lord Proprietary, wrote a graphic account of the reduction to obedience of Kent Island, the inhabitants of which, instigated by William Claiborne, had continued to ignore the authority of Lord Baltimore since the colony's founding.

He noted that there were about 120 men on the island and that he had named one ROBERT PHILPOT from among them to be commander of Kent Island. He wrote

"I have sent you herewith a letter from Mr. Robert Philpot of Kent (who hath at this present the commaund of the Ieland) to his father the keeper of Hyde Park, I pray cause it to be delivered unto him and finde some occasion to commend his sonne unto him for his faire carraige here, as he doth deserve, for he came in at first claime I made of the Ielanders submission to your Pattent, and incouraige his father I pray what you can to supply him this yeare, for that I understand is the intent of his letter to him."

The name PHILPOT appears on a street sign in one of the oldest sections of Baltimore, Fells Point. It also appears on a road sign in Baltimore County -- the road leading to the PHILPOT HOUSE.

Almost three centuries after ROBERT PHILPOT, we find a MISS KITTY PHILPOT on the banks of the Gunpowder Falls in her ancestral home, which she stubbornly preserved during her lifetime.

Again, when the time is found to do some investigation, we may find some interesting connections.

for HHT survey file: Back X-PHO-271 ROCKFORD

ARTISTS ACQUIRE OLD PHILPOT
HOMESTEAD AT PHOENIX AND
ARE NOW RESTORING IT

Misses Dashiell Having Time Of Lives Rejuvenating
Ancient Place---Oldest Part Of House Said

To Have Been Built In 17th Century

MD. V.F.
ENOCH PRATT
FREE LIBRARY

Can you imagine anything more interesting, even thrilling, than being endowed with an artistic temperament and bent and reared to an appreciation of antiques, to suddenly acquire one of the most picturesque old homesteads in Baltimore County, with a free hand to restore it and cause it to bloom in all its primitive charm as your own home?

Well, that piece of good fortune has come to the Misses Eleanore Mariens and Mary Locke Dashiell, daughters of Dr. and Mrs. Nicholas Locke Dashiell, of Baltimore, who have purchased "Rockford", the old Philpot homestead, at Phoenix, and are now, with the help of their father and mother, engaged in the delightful pursuit of putting the ancient house and its surroundings in order.

And what thrills they are getting out of their adventure, all of them! The land, of which their thirty-six-acre farm is a part, goes back to patents issued well back in the seventeenth century -- Gunpowder Mills, Greenland, Cole's Chance and Continuance to Cole's Chance appear as some of the tracts involved--and, according to researches made by Miss Eleanor Dashiell, who is an artist and a graduate of Vassar, as is her sister Mary, certain architectural details of the older part of the house, evidently the original structure, appear to place the date of its building sometime in the seventeenth century also.

Who erected the first house on the place is not known. It was just a small stone structure, with either one large room, having a broad central chimney and two opposite fire place openings, or two small rooms on the first floor and two small rooms on the second, reached by a narrow, enclosed stairway from the rear room. All the rooms were low-ceiled, and those above received light from dormer windows. It is more than likely that this house was already standing when the property was acquired by Brian Philpot, founder of the family in America, in the early part of the eighteenth century.

Brian Philpot, Sr. was born in Stamford, England, son of Philip, and being orphaned when quite young, went to London, where he engaged in business with his two uncles, John and Thomas. He came to America to establish a branch of the Philpot business in Baltimore, married Mary Johns and acquiring the land tract at Phoenix made the place his country residence. He also bought much property in Baltimore Town and possessed himself of other County holdings on Chestnut Ridge and in Worthington Valley.

Brian Philpot, Jr. was born in his father's Baltimore home in 1749, made an enviable record in the Colonial Army during the Revolutionary War, married Elizabeth Johnson and died in 1814. The children of Brian, Jr. and Elizabeth Johnson Philpot were: Brian 3rd, Mary, Elizabeth, Clarissa, John and Edward.

John, who inherited "Rockford", was born in 1801, and in 1823 married his cousin, Miss Susan Isabella Stewart, who was related to some of the most prominent people of the State, including the Stewart, Buchanan, Lounsbury, Lloyd and Johns families. He was a lawyer by profession, an old-line Whig, and in 1844 was his Party's candidate for Congress. On the dissolution of the Whig Party he became a Democrat and for many years held the office of Commissioner of Insolvent Debtors. He was also Register of Wills and one of the first directors of the Susquehanna Railroad. He died in 1879, leaving a family of five children: Mary D., Thomas, Elizabeth Buchanan, Catherine Stewart and Isabella.

Thomas Philpot, son of John, entered the office of the Register of Wills as a clerk under his father, served under several different incumbents for eighteen years, was appointed to fill out the unexpired term of Mr. Heller, who died in office and was elected Register in the fall of 1880, serving from the beginning of next year until 1893. He died at "Rockford" in 1898, leaving the home place to his sister, Miss Catherine Stewart Philpot, who made it her home until her death in 1928.

Catherine Stewart Philpot willed the property to her cousin, Blanchard Randall, of Baltimore, who sold it to Benjamin E. Powell and wife under deed dated April 24, 1929 and after a proprietorship of more than a hundred and fifty years, the homestead passed out of the Philpot family. Benjamin Powell then sold it to Dorothy E. Minor and her husband, in 1931, and in July 1933, the Misses Dashiell acquired it by purchase from the Minors.

The original tract comprised several hundred acres, but by 1897 it had shrunk to eighty acres and now includes only thirty-one acres.

As stated before, nobody seems to know who built the original, small stone house on the property, but the frame structure which completes the house as it stands today, is said to have been added to the original by Brian Philpot some time after he acquired the place.

It is a Dutch colonial addition, giving a complete residence of eight small, low-ceiled rooms, with interesting fire places and mantles throughout, both broad and narrow doors, "H" hinges, wide board white pine floors, wall closets, a narrow stairs leading up from the middle room to the second floor, little windows of original glass and all the other details that old, old houses hold to bewitch the appreciative mind.

To the rear of the house and across a small, walled-in court or the old slave quarters, in good state of preservation. They are built of stone and have four rooms, two on the first and two on the second, with dormer windows lighting the upper rooms. And down the hill are the barn, ice house and spring house, all of stone and all in good condition.

The homestead is charmingly set upon the wooded top of a high hill overlooking the Campover river and the village of Frederick; its surroundings are primitive and, it is understood, the intentions of its present owners are to leave them so. In fact, though they have already installed electric light and a modern plumbing system, they can be counted upon to be most careful in their restoration of the old place not to spoil its atmosphere or mar the enchantment of its antiquity.

The Jeffersonian, Towson, Maryland

July 6, 1934.